

Message Text

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21

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9039

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT PINR PGOV CH

SUBJECT: CHINA'S NEW ACTING PREMIER

REF: (A) STATE 030979 (B) PEKING 0210

1. THE FEATURE ANNOUNCEMENT IN YESTERDAY'S PEOPLE'S DAILY OF HUA KUO-FENG AS ACTING PREMIER INDICATES TO US THAT THE REGIME IS PREPARING ITS PEOPLE FOR A RATHER LONG INTERVAL WITH HUA AS THE LEADING FIGURE IN GOVERNMENT. IT WOULD APPEAR POINTLESS TO ANNOUNCE PUBLICLY THE APPOINTMENT IF THE NPC WERE TO RATIFY ANOTHER CANDIDATE FOR THE PERMANENT POSITION AS PREMIER OR IF TENG HSIAO-PING STILL WAS A SERIOUS CONTENDER. THE SHOCK OF HUA'S APPOINTMENT IS A BLOW NOT ONLY TO TENG'S POLITICAL CAREER BUT TO THE IMAGE OF A CAREFULLY THOUGHT OUT, SMOOTH SUCCESSION PROGRAM AS WELL.

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2. NONETHELESS HUA'S POWER BASE ON THE OTHER HAND

SEEMS RELATIVELY WEAK. HE IS OBVIOUSLY A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE, AND THE LEADERSHIP PICUTRE IS ANYTHING BUT STABLE. HUA TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, HAS NEVER BEEN ABROAD, AND HIS EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS BEEN LIMITED TO HIS WELCOMING VISITING FOREIGN DELEGATIONS IN PEKING. FUTHERMORE, ASIDE FROM A STINT AS POLITICAL COMMISSAR IN THE CANTON MILITARY REGION (AND A PROBABLE POSITION ON THE MILITARY COMMISSION DUE TO HIS PUBLIC SECURITY TITLE), HUA HAS NO DEEP AND ABIDING TIES TO THE PLA. AT THIS POINT, WHILE WE SEE LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT TENG WILL MAKE A COMEBACK AND RESUME HIS FORMERLY EXPECTED ROLE AS HEAD OF GOVERNMENT, HUA'S ABILITY TO GOVERN SMOOTHLY IS IN QUESTION, AND IT APPEARS THAT TENG AND THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION REHABILITEES WILL STILL HAVE CONSIDERABLE POWER.

3. IN TERMS OF POLICY, HOWEVER, WE SEE LITTLE IN HUA'S PRIOR BEHAVIOR THAT DIFFERENTIATES HIM FROM TENG. HUA WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF HUNAN'S REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE (RC) DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. THIS COMMITTEE RECEIVED A LOT OF FLACK FROM THE SHENG WU LIEN, A COALITION OF SOME TWENTY RED GUARD GROUPS FROM HUNAN, WHICH ACCUSED THE RC OF SUPPRESSING THEM (SCMP NO. 4196). FUTHERMORE, HUA WAS THE FIRST HIGH-RANKING PERSON DURING THE ANTI-CONFUCIUS/LIN PIAO CAMPAIGN OF 1974 TO BE CRITICIZED, AGAIN FOR SUPPRESSING LEFTIST ACTIVITIES DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION. IN TERMS OF CURRENT POLICY, HUA HAS BEEN THE VICE PREMIER AND POLITBURO MEMBER WITH AUTHORITY OVER CHINA'S SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FIELDS, AS EVIDENCED BY HIS APPEARANCE RECORD OVER THE PAST YEAR. THIS AREA, OF COURSE, HAS BEEN UNDER BITTER LEFTIST ATTACK RECENTLY, AND THUS HUA'S APPOINTMENT DOES NOT IN ANY WAY STRIKE US AS A VICTORY FOR THE RADICAL POSITION.

4. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE HAVE BEEN PERSISTENT REPORTS IN RECENT YEARS THAT HUA HAS PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE MODERATE POLICIES OF CHINA EVER SINCE THE FALL OF LIN PIAO IN 1971. AT THAT TIME, HE WAS SHIFTED TO PEKING AND WAS REPORTEDLY MADE A MEMBER OF A FIVE-MAN COMMISSION HEADED BY CHOU EN-LAI, TO INVESTIGATE THE LIN PIAO AFFAIR. BETWEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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1971 AND 1975 HE IS ALSO RUMORED TO HAVE HEADED UP THE GENERAL OFFICE OF THE STATE COUNCIL, WHICH WOULD HAVE GIVEN HIM CONSIDERABLE POWER OVER PERSONNEL AFFAIRS CONSIDERABLE KNOWLEDGE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION, AND A ROLE IN CADRE REHABILITATION.
CROSS

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